

Early Childhood Special Education Educational Environments

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has recently announced changes to their data collection requirements for children with disabilities in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Beginning with the December 1, 2006, child count, districts will need to report the "total educational environment" of each identified child in ECSE rather than the previously reported placement category. The following provides guidance to districts in determining the appropriate educational environment category for each child. **These educational environments do not replace the placement decisions that are made by the IEP team and documented on the IEP.**

Following this listing of educational environments and codes for use in reporting the December 1 child count on Screen 11 of Core Data are decision rules for determining the appropriate educational environment for each child.

Code	Educational Environment	Description
00A1	In the regular early childhood program at least 80% of time	Children with disabilities who attend an early childhood program and are in the early childhood program for at least 80% of time.
00A2	In the regular early childhood program 40% to 79% of time	Children with disabilities who attend an early childhood program and are in the early childhood program for no more than 79% but no less than 40% of time.
00A3	In the regular early childhood program less than 40% of time	Children with disabilities who attend an early childhood program and are in the early childhood program for less than 40% of time.
00B1	Separate class	Children with disabilities who attend a special education program in a class with less than 50% nondisabled children. (Do not include children who also attend a regular early childhood program.)
00B2	Separate school	Children with disabilities who receive special education and related services in public or private day schools designed specifically for children with disabilities. (Do not include children who also attend a regular early childhood program.)
00B3	Residential facility	Children with disabilities who receive special education and related services in publicly or privately operated residential schools or residential medical facilities on an inpatient basis. (Do not include children who also attend a regular early childhood program.)
00B4	Home	Children with disabilities who receive special education and related services in the principal residence of the child's family or caregivers, and who did not attend an early childhood program or a special education program provided in a separate class, separate school, or residential facility. Include children who receive special education both at home and in a service provider location. The term caregiver includes babysitters.
00B5	Service provider location	Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services from a service provider, and who did not attend an early childhood program or a special education program provided in a separate class, separate school, or residential facility. Do not include children who also receive special education at home. Children who receive special education both in a service provider location and at home should be reported in the Home category.

When reporting educational environments for children in early childhood special education, use the following decision rules to determine which environment to use for each child.

1. The first factor to consider is whether the child is attending a **regular early childhood program**, as defined below, regardless of whether the child receives special education services in the early childhood program and regardless of whether the IEP team determined the early childhood program was necessary in order for the child to receive a free appropriate public education. If the child is attending a regular early childhood program, report the child in category A1, A2, or A3. Report the child in one of these environments even if the child receives special education services in other environments. Refer to the instructions in the section below to determine which of percent of time category is appropriate.

Early childhood program: A program that includes at least 50 percent nondisabled children. Early childhood programs include, but are not limited to:

- Head Start;
- Private preschools;
- Integrated classrooms (only if at least 50 percent of the children are nondisabled);
- Preschool classes offered to an eligible pre-kindergarten population by the public school system; and
- Group child care.

Attendance at an early childhood program need not be funded by IDEA, Part B funds in order to be reported for purposes of educational environments for child count.

2. If the child does not attend a regular early childhood program, the next factor to consider is whether the child attends a **special education program**, as defined below. If so, report the child in category B1, B2, or B3 according to the location of the special education program. Report the child in one of these environments even if the child also receives special education at home or in a service provider location.

Special education program: A program that includes less than 50 percent nondisabled children. Special education programs include, but are not limited to, special education and related services provided in:

- Special education classrooms (including classrooms that include less than 50 percent nondisabled children) in
 - regular school buildings;
 - trailers or portables outside regular school buildings;
 - child care facilities;
 - hospital facilities on an outpatient basis;
 - other community-based settings;
- Separate schools; and
- Residential facilities.

3. Home: If the child does not attend a regular early childhood program or a special education program, the next factor to consider is whether the child receives some or all of his/her special education services in the **home**. If the child receives any of his/her special education services in the home, report the child in category B4.

4. Service provider location: If the child does not attend a regular early childhood program or a special education program, and if the child does not receive any special education services in the home, report the child in category B5. Service provider locations include, but are not limited to:

- Private clinicians' offices;
- Clinicians' offices located in school building;
- Hospital facilities on an outpatient basis; and
- Libraries and other public locations.

Calculating Time in Regular Early Childhood Programs

When determining whether to report a child in A1, A2, or A3, you must calculate the percentage of time the child spends in a regular early childhood program. This calculation is essentially the same used for school-age special education, except that it is looking at percent of time *INSIDE* regular programs instead of the percent of time *OUTSIDE* the regular program. The numerator for this calculation is the amount of time per week the child spends in a regular early childhood program. The denominator for this calculation is the *total number of hours the child spends in a regular early childhood program PLUS any time the child spent receiving special education and related services outside of a regular early childhood program*. The result is multiplied by 100. For example,

- If the child attends a regular early childhood program 6 hours a week and receives special education and related services in a special education program for an additional 4 hours a week, the calculation would be $(6 \div 10 = .60 * 100 = 60\%)$. Therefore, report the child in A2, in the regular early childhood program 40% to 79% of time. Include in the denominator any time spent receiving special education in the special education program. This is true even if the child receives little or no special education in the early childhood program.
- If the child attends a regular early childhood program 6 hours a week and receives 1 hour of special education and related services at home and an additional half hour of special education and related services at a service provider location, the calculation would be $(6 \div 7.5 = 0.8 * 100 = 80\%)$. Therefore, report the child in A1, in the regular early childhood program at least 80% of time.
- If a child is pulled out of the regular early childhood program to receive special education, this is considered time *outside* the regular early childhood program. Include this time in the denominator but not the numerator of the calculation. For example, if a child attends a regular early childhood program for 6 hours a week, but is pulled out of that environment for 2 hours each week to receive speech instruction, the calculation would be $(4 \div 6 = .67 * 100 = 67\%)$. Therefore, report the child in A2, in the regular early childhood program 40% to 79% of time.